NOV 2 7 1911
EXCHANGE
FOREIGN DISSERTATION
54807
B 2646498
UC-NRLF
B 2 646 498

...iam Blake

in his Relation to

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

A Dissertation presented

to the

Philosophical Faculty of the University of Zürich

for the

Acquisition of the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

J. C. E. Bassalik-de Vries.

from Zwolle (Holland).

Approved by Prof. Dr. Th. Vetter.

BASEL
Buchdruckerei Brin & Cie.
1911.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

William Blake

in his Relation to

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

In the memoir on Dante Gabriel Rossetti which precedes the family letters of this poet*), William M. Rossetti tells us that his brother had procured a manuscript book with the poems of William Blake from an attendant in the British Museum in the month of April 1847. "He then proceeded", William Rossetti goes on, "to copy-out across a confused tangle of false starts, alternative forms and cancelling all the poetry in the book, and I did the same for the prose. His ownership of this truly precious volume**) stimulated in some degree his disregard or scorn of some aspects of art held in reverence by dilettante and routine students and thus conduced to the Praeraphaelitic Movement; for he found here the most (and no doubt the most irrational) epigrams and jeers against such painters as Correggio, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Reynolds, and Gainsborough. They were balsam to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's soul and grist to his mill". Thus far William M. Rossetti, and undoubtedly the finding of this little booklet has exercised a great influence on his brother and through him indeed conduced much to the Praeraphaelitic movement. However this influence was exercised not only on account of its sharp criticism on the Venetian and Flemish schools of painting, but more because of its simple and naive poems with their strange metres, through its weird pictures and the daring doctrines it put forth, and most of all through the spirit of mysticism which breathes through the whole and gives it such a wonderful charm. Like German Romanticism the Praeraphaelitic movement was a revolt against the prosaic acceptance, pseudo-classicism, and thoughtless imitation of the foregoing century, and as such, as it were an aftergrowth of the great

*) W. M. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his Family Letters. London 1895.

**) At the sale of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's effects this little book fetched over one hundred guineas. Recollections of D. G. Rossetti and his Circle by Henry F. Dunn (Chapter III). London 1904.

romantic school in Germany, its distinguishing feature was its mysticism, which can be traced through all the works of the Praeraphaelites, be they literary or artistic. Already in some later works of the German Romantics, e. g. in the second part of Goethe's Faust and in Hoffmann's Erzählungen, mystic ideas are interwoven; but what I may perhaps term "modern mysticism", to distinguish it from the Catholic mysticism of the Middle Ages, found its true development in the literary and artistic productions of the Praeraphaelitic school; and the great fore-runner of this school was William Blake. In the following pages I will try to examine somewhat closer than has been done up to now wherein this influence existed and in how far Blake really conduced to the Praeraphaelitic movement.

Indeed, beyond the mere acknowledgement that such an influence did exist I found nowhere a single effort for a somewhat thorough investigation. I think that it suffices for this purpose when I show the influence Blake has exercised on Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Not because he was the greatest of the Praeraphaelites,*) for indeed G. F. Watts**) far excelled him as a painter, creating new myths, whereas Rossetti's genius concentrated itself principally in the reproduction of single female figures; Robert Browning was a greater poet; Holman Hunt remained faithful in all his works to the rules laid down in their first assemblies; Dante Gabriel Rossetti, not even in the religious period of his art, stuck to the rules he himself had laid down with so much ardour. And I think it was J. E. Millais, who

*) When I talk of Praeraphaelites I mean this school in its widest sense. Robert Browning belongs to it because of his great love for the Italian art as well as for the minute carefulness he displays in his descriptions, but most of all because of the great stress he lies on the study of soul. "Little else", he writes, "than the development of a soul is worth study" (Preface of Sordello). Others like G. F. Watts and Burne-Jones, though only for a time painting under the Praeraphaelitic banner, I include as well, as F. Madox Brown, Ch. Collins, A. Hughes, and many others of lesser note. It seems that the row closes with Byam Shaw's picture Love's Baubles and that he is the last of all those who painted or wrote under the influence of the Praeraphaelitic school.

**) Even in his Praeraphaelitic period.

showed himself the greater painter with his "Lorenzo and Isabella", at the same time the most typical Praeraphaelitic picture. It has the hard outline and glowing colours of the quattrocento paintings, at the same time the dreadful spiritual love of Isabella hints, though it has an awful ascetic power, at the perversity of E. A. Poe, or perhaps O. Wilde's Salome. For it was that part of the Middle Ages which the Praeraphaelites have tried to render, in which souls were very pale but filled with hot desires, in which the lust of the senses mixed with the prayers of the mystics, and in which the anticipated joys of heaven were not so great as the earthly miseries. It was a dream of the Middle Ages full of melancholy, sensuousness, and glowing colours, and as I said above, it was not Dante Gabriel Rossetti in whose works more than in those of all representatives of this school its most typical qualities were united. Although not the greatest nor the most typical of the Praeraphaelites, yet his influence has been the greatest, because he was by far the strongest personality and the greatest intellectual force. On all the persons who came in contact with him he made a great impression; some of them remained under his influence for the rest of their careers, others were only spell-bound for a short while by the brilliancy of his talk and the power of his strong mind; on all these his influence has had a lasting effect.

William M. Rossetti tells us how already as a mere boy his brother was impetuous and vehement and essentially of a dominant turn in intellect, and a leader in temperament. Ruskin says of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: "I believe Rossetti's name should be placed first on the list of men within my own range of knowledge who have raised and changed the spirit of modern art; raised in absolute attainment, changed in direction of temper." And elsewhere: "Rossetti was the chief intellectual force in the modern romantic school of England".*) Holman Hunt mentions his power of inspiring enthusiasm and making proselytes, a power which according to H. Hunt he seems to have exercised to an inconvenient extent and to which Hunt himself was compelled to

*) See Benson, Life of Rossetti. London 1904. Chapter VII.

yield in spite of himself. And of Burne-Jones a pretty little anecdote has been told which perhaps brings out more than anything else the fascinating power of Rossetti's genius. It is said that a critic looking at a picture of Burne-Jones remarked that it was merely an imitation of Rossetti. "And if so", the artist answered, "I am quite content to imitate Gabriel". It was this ascendency over others to which were added great capacity for criticism, so rare in artists, an unselfish delight in the work of others, a splendid memory for any poetry which had won his admiration, and "a voice rarely equalled for simple recitations" (Hunt) which made Dante Gabriel Rossetti the soul of the Praeraphaelitic movement and earned for him the name of Father of Praeraphaelitism, bestowed upon him by William Sharp in his "Life of Rossetti", 1883. And it could not be, but that the bend of Rossetti's genius was the dominating power of the Praeraphaelitic movement, and that the influence which exercised its power on Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the influence to which all other Praeraphaelites were subjected.

The influence which William Blake exercised on Dante Gabriel Rossetti was of a three-fold nature. He owes much to him:

a) as a philosopher,
b) as a poet,
c) as a painter.

It was however, as I mentioned above, Blake's mysticism, by which Dante Gabriel Rossetti was mostly impressed, and therefore I shall speak of this influence in the first place. It should, however, be borne in mind that Blake's philosophic doctrines were laid down in a literary and in an artistic form, viz: in his poems and in his pictures, and that therefore it is often very difficult and sometimes impossible to separate Blake the philosopher from Blake the artist or the poet, so that when I make this division for the sake of clearness and discuss successively Blake's influence from a philosophical, literary, and artistic point of view, these influences must not be thought of as existing isolated, but as continually supporting and correcting each other.

Influence of W. Blake's Philosophy.

As a philosopher William Blake is a pupil of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic whose many religious books appeared between the years 1745 and 1771. Already as a child William Blake had adopted many of the doctrines of Swedenborg on mere hearsay. His father, an Irish dissenter, as Alexander Gilchrist (1828—61, Blake's biographer) calls him, and his eldest brother James were both ardent followers of Swedenborg. The principal doctrine which Blake never abandoned, which was more and more approved of by his imagination, which was constantly affirmed by his visions, changed every idea that he otherwise would have found in religion, and affected the standard of his poetry, was Swedenborg's doctrine of universal correspondence. This theory teaches that bodies are the generation and expression of souls; it makes all things into signs as well as powers, and the smallest things as well as the greatest are omens, warnings, and instructions. In his book the "Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture" Swedenborg gives the following explanation about the meaning of correspondences. From the Lord proceed three degrees: the Celestial, the Spiritual, and the Natural, one after another. What proceeds from the divine love is called celestial, what proceeds from the divine wisdom is called spiritual; the natural is from both and is their complex in the ultimate. The divine which comes down from the Lord to men descends through these degrees and contains these three degrees in it; these degrees are entirely distinct from one another like end, cause, and effect and yet make one by correspondence; for the natural corresponds to the spiritual and also to the celestial. The "Word" is written in the style of the Prophets and the Evangelists, which, though it appear common, yet conceals within it all divine and angelic wisdom "Each and all things in nature correspond to spiritual things."

The idea that the Bible was a sacred code written by inspiration which only men who were inspired by visions from Heaven like Swedenborg (Arcana Coelestia) and himself*) could interpret, was taken up and adopted by Blake also in regard to the highest utterances of poetry; the only way in which the different degrees of correspondence could be expressed was by means of allegory and symbols, in which every word, or in drawing every design, had a second or perhaps a third hidden meaning. "Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding is my definition of the most sublime poetry", Blake writes in a letter to Thomas Butts, 1803. Such allegory is found in all Blake's poems and fills the Prophetic Books; it forms the greatest attraction of Blake's engravings, though no longer "hidden from all corporeal understanding", since in 1893 a complete edition of Blake's works appeared, edited by E. G. Ellis and W. B. Yeats, who show us in an elaborate treatise that a consistent system underlies Blake's writings, that his message, though very complex, claims to be only a personal statement of universal truth; a system to deliver men from systems. Much has been made clear by their ingenious explanation, but for all that the Prophetic Books remain dim and chaotic as dreams, their imaginative and coherent thought-structure fails in carrying conviction with it.

From Swedenborg**) Blake also took the belief in the angels; the angelic wisdom, the occupations of the angels, their being the exact counterpart of men, and many interesting particulars of the angelic world; here Blake goes beyond Swedenborg in accepting the existence of evil spirits; he says: "Swedenborg received his teaching from angels only, while he ought to have consulted devils also", therefore his teaching shall be "as the linen clothes folded up". For, and here we touch another keynote of Blake's teaching, "without contraries there is no pro-

*) Blake had visions from the time of his youth when he was once set screaming by the appearance of our Lord; and these visions never left him unto the time of his death.

**) Swedenborg, Divine Love and Wisdom; Heaven and Hell.

gression". Blake is a passionate preacher of moral and political freedom and repels all the coërcive devices of the formalist as well as the regulative distinction between right and wrong of the moralist. Man is law to himself. "Nor is it possible to thought a greater than itself to know". The divine human body may not be divided into two parts, body and soul, labelling the one as evil the other as good (The voices of the devil. Marriage of Heaven and Hell). In his Books of America and Europe he expands on the triumph of free love and throughout all Blake's works we find, that he preaches free indulgence in all bodily desires, though always with a sub-idea that only in this way the spirit can be made free.

"Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs and flowing hair;
But desire gratified
Plants fruits of life and beauty there."

(Couplets and Fragments.)

"He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence."

(Marriage of Heaven and Hell.)

"Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering churchyard
And a palace of Eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave?
Over his porch these words are written
Take thy bliss, Oh Man!"

(Daughters of Albion.)

These can serve as examples for the fore-going and I could find ever so many more, for Blake likes to repeat his favourite doctrines again and again under different forms. Swedenborg does not preach these extreme views, but Blake was not the first mystic, who held the opinion that the desires of the body had a right to be indulged in. There existed a religious sect, who called themselves "Brethren of the free spirit", they were adherents to the principle that unless the lusts of the body be satisfied, the spirit cannot be raised to the heights of its true development. And it is not impossible that Blake in his vast reading had come across this theory and adopted it as his own.

Like Swedenborg, Blake believed in the "Grand Man". Swedenborg says in "Arcana Coelestia", his most famous book (1749-56), "the whole Heaven is a Grand Man (Maximus Homo) and it is called a Grand Man, because it corresponds to the Lord's divine Human; and by so much as an angel or spirit or a man on earth has from the Lord, they also are men .... All things in the human body, in general and particular, correspond most exactly to the Grand Man and as it were to so many societies there." The same idea of a composite individual Blake puts forth in the prophetic Book Jerusalem:

"We live as one man, for, contracting our infinite senses
We behold multitudes, or expanding we behold as one,
As one Man all the universal family and that one man
We call Jesus the Christ."

Besides this one Man, the Divine Saviour, there were lesser "composites", called "states", these come into existence when imagination in the person of some imaginative man perceives them, as sound comes into existence when we hear it and light when we see it.

"We are not individuals but states,
Combinations of individuals."

(Milton, Book II.)

"Man passes on, but states remain for ever, he passes through them like the traveller who may as well suppose that the places he has passed through exist no more, as a man may suppose that the states he has passed through exist no more."

(Last Judgment.)

In his youth Blake racked his mind over the riddle of human existence. In the Book of Thel, which forms a transition between his lyrical poems and his prophetic books, he laments the limitations of the flesh All other animate and inanimate things seem happy in the conscious discharge of their earthly duties; why does man alone suffer from a perversion of the senses by

some tyrannical law? Why should he put a restraint upon his natural enjoyments?

"Why cannot the ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistening eye to the passion of a smile —
Why a tongue impressed with honey from every wind;
Why a nostril wide inhaling terror trembling and affright?
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy?" etc.

Soon however this spirit of doubt is taken from Blake. The immemorial struggle between the body and the soul, the man principle and the woman principle, Satan and the redeeming powers, the cause of all human suffering is the result of the fall of mankind; a fall from a hermaphroditic state into generative life, from the kingdom of Imagination, the celestial, into the natural world, the vegetative. This division of mankind into sexual life tended to a closing up of men into separate selfhoods; each selfhood was guilty of error, and gradually the inlets through which communication with the universal spirit, the eternal imagination, were maintained, were dried up; the senses were mostly used for the natural world only.

'One day the world was a Paradise
And Imagination was its principal Goddess."

"If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to men as it is: infinite. For man has closed himself up until he sees all things through the narrow chinks in his cavern".

(A memorable Fancy.)

It is now his, Blake's mission in life, to lead man back to the golden age in which imagination reigned supreme and the reasoning powers of man were kept in proper subjection. In his prophetic Book "Jerusalem", he calls it his great task "to open the eternal worlds, to open the eternal eyes of Man inwards, into the worlds of thought, into eternity, ever expanding in the bosom of God, the human Imagination." The redeeming powers of mankind are love and imaginative art.

"No one knows what the life of man is, unless he
knows that it is love."

(Margical notes to Swedenborg's
"Angelic Wisdom".)

In nearly all his poems he sings of love in one of its many aspects; in the "Songs of Innocence" the divine love is dwelled upon in The Lamb, The Divine Image, On Another's Sorrow. In the Songs of Experience Love appears in its earthly garb, the temptations and struggles of love are put forth.

"For the strife of Love is the abysmal strife,
And the word of Love is the word of life."

He likes to dwell on the contrast of divine and human love. In his poem the Clod and the Pebble, or in William Bond, a very mystical poem interpreted in a different way by Edwin J. Ellis, Charles A. Swinburne, and other Blake commentators, the last two stanzas are:

"I thought Love lived in the hot sunshine,
But oh, he lives in the moony light!
I thought Love lived in the heat of day,
But sweet Love is the comforter of night.

Seek Love in the pity of others' woe,
In the gentle relief of another's care,
In the darkness of night and the winter's snow,
In the naked and outcast, seek Love there!

And in his Prophetic Books, he, to use his own words, does nothing but

"Weaves into dreams the sexual strife
And mourns over the web of life."

At Blake's death many unpublished, or rather unknown Mss. were found, but Frederick Tatham, considering these to lessen the fame of his friend by the heretical opinions they

expressed, destroyed them,*) and thus we find Blake's philosophic system incomplete. I think, however, that we know enough of it such as we find it, that in his turbulent evangile, doctrines of the most opposed abstract systems confront each other, and that his beliefs, however positive to himself for the time he entertained them, were fluctuating and shifting, and that the only ideas which pretty constantly show forth in strong relief are the few I singled out in the foregoing pages.

Of these ideas Blake has taken most, as I have shown, from Swedenborg, who had written them in his many books with great care and lucidity earlier in the century. But Blake's thoroughly artistic temperament conceived the notion, that the old truths wanted to be said in a new form to bring them home to mankind, and that the mystic truths should be expressed through the medium of the fine Arts. Up to now, mysticism had laid down her principles dogmatically in the language of the Church. From being theological the language became literary and poetical, and where words could not express the abstractions of the heavenly visions, Blake, in whose mind the most abstract notions crystallised into shapes, made sketches and drawings of these visions, such as he had them before his "mental eyes." That the result of these proceedings was startlingly original can be easily conceived; already by this sole reason Blake's works must have had great attraction for Dante Gabriel Rossetti. For he loved everything out of the Common and had a natural inclination for the supernatural and marvellous. As early as 1843 he wrote a ballad Sir Hugh the Heron, an imitation of W. Scott which, though very unripe and of no value, shows Dante Gabriel Rossetti's love for the mysterious. And in the following pages we will consider in detail the influence in which this attraction resulted. For as Blake was a man of genius both as a poet and as a painter, it could not be but that his works won the life-long admiration of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and influenced nearly

*) According to Mrs. Gilchrist, to whom Tatham himself orally communicated this fact. Helen Richter (William Blake, 1906, page 393) does not believe in the loss of many Mss.

everything he produced. There is, however, a great difference between the mysticism of Blake and Rossetti. This difference lies in the fact, that the religious side of mysticism never affected Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Always the artistic side of Blake's mysticism appealed to him; in later life he accepted some of its moral-philosophical doctrines; as a religious system it never was of the slightest value to him.

William Blake was a fervent Christian and a man of great faith throughout his life. Never once he despaired of his mission, never he doubted of the heavenly origin of his visions, or of his writings. "I may praise them, since I dare not pretend to be other than the secretary, the authors are in Eternity", Blake writes in a letter to Thomas Butts 1802 about the Prophetic books. And though poverty and want are at his door, he never makes concessions in order to see his books printed and earn a little money. With infinite patience and care he continues writing down his weird fancies and illuminating them with his fantastic drawings. Quite pathetic is the way in which he gives himself some poor bits of consolation for his worldly failure. "I am more famed in Heaven" he writes to Flaxman*) from his cottage in Felpham, "for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life; these are the delight of the archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches and fame of mortality?" Valiantly Blake fought on until the end of his life full of faith:

"I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

(Milton. Preface.)

*) John Flaxman, the well-known sculptor and draughtsman who made a great reputation by his illustrations for Homer, Aeschylus and Dante.

In the midst of his mental fight death comes to him, and he dies singing in a loud clear voice some mystic snatches of song to a tune of his own; even on his deathbed still receiving evidence of the spiritual world.

Altogether different is the position which Dante Gabriel Rossetti takes up in religious matters. He has been called a sceptic (Benson, Life of Rossetti), but I do not think this term describes in any way his attitude towards religion, which rather has been one of vain longing. His mind dwelt much on the mystery of death, the horror of pain and decay, and he tried, and during some years of his life tried very hard, to believe in a divine power to harmonize the miseries of mankind.

In his youth he writes the mystical story "St. Agnes of Intercession."*) In this story, which had the sub-title "an auto-psychology", Rossetti tells how a painter is struck by the likeness of the portrait of his bride to a portrait of St. Agnes by a painter of the middle-ages. He goes to Italy to see the original picture and discovers that this is a portrait of a lady "deeply attached" to the painter. At the same time he sees his own face in the portrait the painter made of himself. A violent illness is the result of the mental shock of this discovery, and all the weird possibilities which he draws from it. Slowly he recovers, but cannot forget the strange adventure he, or rather his soul, had had. At this point the story is broken off. Dante Gabriel Rossetti tries to believe in it in the pre-existence of the soul, but he cannot, and thus disillusioned breaks the story off in the middle. It is true that we have a poem written in his earlier years in which he adopts the Catholic dogma and reminds us of Dante's Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio (Divina Commedia, Par., Cant. 33). The poem is called**) "Ave", but it was undoubtedly the artistic side of Catholicism which had won Rossetti's sympathies, and has nothing or very little to do with his inmost conviction. The same holds good for his two religious pictures "Girlhood of the Virgin Mary" and "Ecce ancilla Domini". And

*) Collected works of D. G. Rossetti. London 1906, vol. I, p. 399.
**) ibid. p. 244.

I think, that in the other poems of Rossetti where he expresses religious ideas we must see them in the same light as the foregoing.

"Would God I knew there were a God to thank,
When thanks rise in me"

seems to be the true attitude of Rossetti towards religion. However, after the death of his beloved wife, he seems in the yearning after spiritual consolation to find what he seeks for a while in the doctrines of spiritualism.*)

Very interesting is his correspondence about this subject, falling in the years 1865—67, and especially the letters of Baron Kirkup who tells of his experiences with different spirits as: Dante, Garibaldi etc., are highly remarkable. They show us that Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "disposition towards believing in the spiritualism was too much rather than too little" (William M. Rossetti) But though we hear of regular spiritual "seances" where Mrs. Marshall and her husband, she a wellknown medium of those days, gave evidence of their connection with the world of spirits, the influence of spiritualism on Rossetti's mind was not of a lasting character. In 1871 he writes:

"The Past is over and fled;
Named new, we name it the old,
Thereof some tale hath been told,
But no word comes from the dead;
Whether at all they be,
Or whether as bond or free,
Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped."

(The Cloud Confines.**)

Clearly this poem indicates that the consolation Rossetti had found in spiritualism had been temporary, and that he had fallen back into the old disbelief. Still more clearly the same

*) The father of Rossetti was, though a Roman Catholic, a free-thinker; the children were educated in the religion of the mother who belonged to the Church of England.

**) ibid. 317.

thoughts are expressed in a poem*) "Soothsay", written a year before his death:

"To God at best, to Chance at worst,
Give thanks for good things, last as first"**)

With Flaubert, Rossetti might have said of himself: „Je suis mystique et je ne crois à rien". This lack of faith which is highly characteristic for the modern mystic in general of course, makes an essential difference between the mysticism of William Blake and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and changes all the doctrines which Rossetti took from the latter. From childhood naturally prone to the marvellous and supernatural, the mysteries of life and death were continually present to the mind of Rossetti, and it could not be but that Blake's theory of "correspondences" made a deep impression upon him. The phenomena in this world are only vague shadows of another, deeper world behind, and what we behold here are tokens and warnings, we are always surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery, but whereas Blake's faith easily solves the problems which lie at the bottom of existence, Rossetti's mind cannot get at the bottom of this mystery, the feelings of tension are present, the feelings of relaxation are wanting. The problems of life and death are not enticing to him, he tries to escape the burthen of their sadness, but he never succeeds in this completely, and the result of this is a subdued sadness which lies over all his works. In this all-pervading sense of sadness and mystery, we have to see Blake's belief in the spiritual cause of natural events. The elements of joy, serenity and happiness are wanting in this

*) ibid. 334.

**) In all Dante G. Rossetti's biographies the story has been told how in his last illness he expressed a wish to receive absolution for his sins. "I can make nothing of Christianity, but I only want a confessor to give me absolution for my sins!" Adding: "I believe in a future life. Have I not had evidence of that often enough? Have I not heard and seen those that died long years ago?" I think that no importance whatever must be attached to these words, but that they must be considered as a passing fancy of a sick brain, the more so as he never insisted on seeing the priest at his bedside.

belief and in the collection of Rossetti's poems we find none to match Blake's splendid lyrics: Nurse's Song, Spring, the Echoing Green, and so many others display an innocent joy and gladness, which qualities though toned down in Blake's later works, never wholly disappear from them. Also among Blake's drawings we find many that show these qualities e. g. his engravings "Infant Joy". "The Reunion of the Soul and the Body", "Morning or Glad Day". In the drawing "Infant Joy" the innocent light-heartedness of youth has been expressed; in the "Reunion of the Soul and the Body" we see the rapture with which after a long separation a longed-for meeting can fill the heart. But especially expressive of joy in an abstract sense is the drawing "Morning or Glad Day". A male, naked figure descends from above; just alighted, he with one foot touches the earth; a flood of radiance still encircles his head; his arms are outspread, exultingly he brings joy and solace to this lower world, announcing the birth of a new day, full of glory. As said above Dante Gabriel Rossetti has neither poems nor pictures to match these in joyfulness and lightheartedness. We always move in an atmosphere of mystery, the inscrutability of which is never lost sight of, and the melancholy and thoughts without hope which are the result of this mysterious sadness, are apparent in all his poems and pictures. This sense of sadness and mystery is not always very pronounced. Sometimes hardly definable, we merely feel that it is there; sometimes it reveals itself in a weird description of nature as in "The Portrait:"

"In painting her I shrined her face
Mid mystic trees, where light falls in
Hardly at all; a covert place
When you might think to find a din
Of doubtful talk, and a live flame
Wandering, and many a shape whose name
Not itself knoweth, and old dew,
And your own footsteps meeting you,
And all things going as they came."

And further on:

"And as I wrought, while all above
And all around was fragrant air,
In the sick burthen of my love
It seemed each sun-thrilled blossom there
Beat like a heart among the leaves."*)

In other poems the sense of sadness becomes oppressive in its very intensity, as in the opening stanzas of "The Bride's Prelude". I believe that here Rossetti goes further than Blake in painting the influence of surroundings. The years full of sorrow, the woeful waiting, the secret sin of the bride make the air of her chamber so very close. A kind of dim horror seems to be exhaled by the heavy hangings and curtains, as if the thoughts full of sin and remorse had passed over in them.

"And even in shade was gleam enough
To shut out full repose
From the bride's 'tiring chamber, which
Was like the inner altar-niche
Whose dimness worship had made rich"**)

(and the next two stanzas).

The same feelings we find expressed in the ballad "the Staff and Scrip" where the room of the queen is described:

"The queen sat idle by her loom:
She heard the arras stir.
And looked up sadly: through the room
The sweetness sickened her
Of musk and myrrh."***)

Though Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the last two examples works out a special idea of Blake in detail, he nearly always adopts his theories in a general sense, especially in the works of his youth. In his later sonnets and pictures he penetrates deeper into them. Probably the part which he took in the

*) Rossetti D. G., The collected works, ed. by W. M. Rossetti. London 1906. Vol. I, 240.

**) ibid. I, 35.

***) ibid. I, 75.

editing of Blake's works by the widow of Alexander Gilchrist, for which edition Rossetti wrote a considerable critical part, now joined to his works under the title of "A literary paper on William Blake", had enlivened his interest in Blake again. Perhaps also the great sorrow of Rossetti's life had inclined him towards philosophical speculation. Howewer it be, it is certain that only after 1863 we find occasionally a special mystical doctrine expressed in Rossetti's works. So that we can assume that the influence of Blake's philosophy made itself felt most distinctly in two periods of Dante G. Rossetti's career. The first time this influence asserts itself most is the Praeraphaelitic period of Rossetti's art, the time of his youth. Here we find Blake's mysticism expressed in a general sense, pervading poems and pictures alike, as will be apparent from the foregoing pages and those that follow.

The second period of Blake's influence in a more marked sense is the time of Rossetti's riper years, when his faculties had reached their highest development. Now Rossetti, as mentioned above, is more inclined towards philosophical speculations; the generalities, the ideas which lie on the surface of Blake's philosophy do not suffice him any longer. He penetrates deeper into the meaning of the doctrines put before him and many special teachings of Blake find utterance in his verse. Especially in his Sonnets' Sequel*) "The House of Love" we find these doctrines expressed. But I shall speak of the general influence first.

The more general sense of mysticism, which, however, I believe finds its origin in Blake's theory of correspondences, is often expressed in the choice of the subject for his poems, as in the ballads "Rose Mary"**) and "Sister Helen".***) In his pictures we observe it in the subjects chosen, as in his drawings "The Gates of Memory", "How they met themselves", or in his crayon drawing "Pandora". It relieves his early artistic productions from the harshness and exaggerated naïveté we find in the pictures

*) ibid. p. 176—227.
**) ibid. p. 103.
***) ibid. p. 66.

of the other Praeraphaelites; this holds good in particular for his picture „Ecce Ancilla Domini". The eyes of the madonna seem full of kept-back tears, they plead for a deeper, warmer humanity than is conceivable with the pure Praeraphaelitic conception. This mysticism finds utterance, and this is very Blakean, in allegory and symbolism. From his early years we possess e. g. a very dark symbolical sonnet "The Vase of Life"*). Human life is figured as a vase, sculptured with a bas-relief, representing a young man running a race, which he wins. A certain man of genius does not like others to crowd round the vase, he masters its imaged significance. He fills it with the rapid and ardent experiences of his career and at last it will hold its ashes. (William M. Rossetti).

In many of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's later sonnets we find again Blake's theory of "states". However, while Blake in personifying his states gave them names and even a feminine part, their weaker or better self, called "emanation", and with these imaginative beings created new myths, Dante Gabriel Rossetti does not go so far in the personification of his moods (Stimmungen). But though individual names do not occur for "states" yet we find that in many sonnets of Rossetti Blake's "states" or their "emanations" are put before our eyes. All of his sonnets are written, as Rossetti testifies in a letter to Mr. Sharp, "on some basis of special momentary emotion". For instance in the sonnet "He and I"**) we have to see a personified mood. It exhibits the surprise when a man finds out that he is no longer himself, no longer youthful and buoyant; how it is that he is old and dejected

"Lo! this new Self now wanders round my field,
With plaints for every flower, and for each tree
A moan,"

and he weeps

". . . o'er sweet waters of my life, that yield
Unto his lips no draught, but tears unseal'd,
Even in my place he weeps. Even I, not he".

*) ibid. 224. **) ibid. I, 226.

Still more distinctly the personification of an abtract idea is seen in "Vain Virtues".*)

"What is the sorriest thing that enters Hell?
None of the sins, but this and that fair deed
Which a soul's sin at length could supersede.
These yet are virgins, whom death's timely knell
Might once have sainted; whom the fiends compel
Together now, in snake-bound shuddering sheaves
Of anguish, while the pit's pollution leaves
Their refuse maidenhood abominable.

Night sucks them down, the tribute of the pit,
Whose names, half entered in the book of Life,
Where God's desire at noon. And as their hair
And eyes sink last, the Torturer deigns no whit
To gaze, but, yearning, waits his destined wife,
The Sin still blithe on earth that sent them there."

Here Rossetti follows Blake in representing the good part of the emotion as a female (In one more instance we find this in his works, viz. in the mystic story "Hand and Soul", where the "emanation" of the human body, the soul, visits a young painter in the form of a woman). The sonnet has a double meaning (William M. Rossetti),

I. an ethical meditation.
II. a spiritual impersonation.

The first means that the condemnation of sin is not so dreadful a thing to reflect upon, as the fact that a sinful soul may have started as a virtuous one and that when the soul is condemned, its virtue as well as its sins are so.

The second meaning indicates, that a virtuous deed, the offspring of a human soul, is a fair virgin, who, were the soul to pass from earthly life, would become a saint in Heaven. But the soul commits a dreadful sin and is married to the devil, but even while sin is still blithe on earth, the fair virgin forfeits her sainthood and is drowned in the pit of doom.

*) ibid. I, 219.

In another Sonnet, 'Heart's Compass"*), we find Blake's idea of a composite individual (the Grand Man). Dante Gabriel Rossetti identifies this supreme being with Love "the evident heart of all life sown and mown". He is awed and impressed when this inner relation of things to each other show him his beloved not as herself alone, but "as the meaning of all things that are." "What," does he ask of himself, "is this power?" and the answer comes: "it is love, love in its best form, with all sensuousness fallen off from it."

In the sonnet "Lost Days" Dante Gabriel Rossetti sees innumerable "states" pass before his eyes, they are those in which, when he passed through them, he did not use the opportunities they brought; he mourns over them and wonders whether they are but "golden coins squandered and still to pay" or "drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet." God knows how after death he will find them back "each one a murdered self", and eternal, while everything on earth is eternal.

In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's pictures he even more than in his poems expresses his mystical feelings by symbolism. Sometimes symbolical figures are heaped in paintings and drawings and charge these with a wealth of feelings not always easily understood. As a typical example of this a small drawing can serve, which Rossetti made as a headpiece for his sonnets in 1880. The drawing represents the floating figure of an angel with an hourglass in one hand and a harp in the other, her hair crowned with laurels, near her a rose tree, at her side a serpent, a butterfly, and medals with the alpha and omega. Over the angel the word "Anima" is written. Dante G. Rossetti gives an explanation that the soul is instituting a memorial of one dead deathless hour by putting a winged hourglass in a rosebush and at the same time touching the 14-stringed harp. To me however this explanation does not make the drawing more clear.

There are also pictures in which we find too much symbolism, for instance "Sibylla Palmifera", an oil painting; here the butterflies (emblems of the soul) are symbolical, the palm in her

*) ibid. I, 190

hand, the vessel of incense, the smoke of which rises before a blinded Cupid. Gradually Rossetti expresses the mystic feeling no longer through the medium of allegory or symbolism. He begins to paint "emotions", "states", and whereas Blake found as representatives for his "states" the male and female figures, Rossetti took the figure of woman alone. In a world where everything else might be a shadow, the physical beauty of woman formed a solid basis of reality, and was accepted by Rossetti as the centre from which all emotions proceed. And gradually there appear the long row of three-quarter length portraits in water-colours and oil paint, or in crayon which all of them represent as many "Stimmungen", all of them are as many personified "states". There is an unmistakable likeness between them, (do not all "emotions" resemble each other more or less?) which consists therein, that all of them represent the "state" and its "emanation" or the emotion in its sensuous and spiritual meaning, those parts of the mood which belong to the body and those which belong to the soul. The nether part of the face is the seat of that side of the emotion which influences the senses and constitutes the baser part of it; here we always find the full red lips with a sensuous curve; the eyes Dante Gabriel Rossetti takes for the spiritual part, the "emanation" of the "state", they possess the depth and glimmer of eternity and the brilliancy of heavenly stars. Rossetti passes through the long scale of emotions and feelings which exist in the human heart and for each of them he has a picture as representative. On one end of this row we may put "Beata Beatrix" *) as expressing the summit of human bliss,

*) In "Beata Beatrix", and not only here, Rossetti uses colour in a symbolical sense. The red bird means passion. The same he does in his picture „Paolo and Francesca" where the floor is strown with red roses. Blake did this very often. He uses red as the symbol of passion, green stands for the instinctive life, pink and white for the highest imagination. Hence we find in the illustrations of the "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (British Museum Copy) the eagle and the serpent painted in streaks of red and green; the same colours are given to the "Tiger", illustrating the poem of that name. Also the angel in the "Marriage of Heaven and Hell", when hearing of Blake's thoughts "grew pink". Throughout all Blake's works examples like the foregoing can be found abundantly. cf. Helen Richter, Blake pg 111.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

on the opposite end "Astarte Syriaca" as the emblem of the most cruel lust; between these, forming the neutral element we have the picture of "Fiametta", the ordinary healthy type of woman, not troubled by any feelings at all, representing a "negative emotion", if such a thing does exist. And between these three all kinds of painted emotions are grouped: their difference often very subtle, their meaning not always easy to understand, notwithstanding, or perhaps because of the allegorical figures which accompany them. Generally they express some phase of love; there is the vague feeling of love which hardly can be expressed in the "Day-Dream"; the feeling of reluctance when sacrificing peace and tranquillity of heart to Love, in "Venus Verticordia";*) the passionate yearning for lost Love in the "Blessed Damozel", and the perverse feelings Love can inspire in its modern phase, in "Lilith".

I think these examples suffice to prove that Rossetti in the painting of his principal pictures, his woman portraits, was a painter of imagination and that the basis on which he founded his theory was born in him under the influence of William Blake.

Influence of W. Blake's Poetry.

The poetic influence of W. Blake on Rossetti made itself mainly felt in the first period of Rossetti's literary career. It mostly concerns Blake's lyrical poems and more especially Blake's "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience". Before these poems Blake had written the lyrics known under the name of "Poetical Sketches". These early poems are all of them written in an Elizabethan strain and show us that Blake must have been an ardent student of Shakespeare and the other poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hewlett**) laboriously informs us of the sources from which these songs have been taken. And indeed it is easy to perceive that lines like:

*) cf. The sonnet, Collected Works 1,360.

**) Contemporary Review, Vol. 28; 1876. William Blake. Imperfect Genius

"Bring me an axe and a spade,
Bring me a winding-sheet,
When I my grave have made,
Let winds and tempests beat;"

(My Silks and fine Array)

have been inspired by the Grave Digger's Song in Hamlet. Also the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher, a new edition of whom had appeard in 1770, is apparent in many of these songs. But if imitated, these poems are perfect imitations of their prototypes. There is the song beginning "Love and harmony combine", or the one dedicated to Memory; the above mentioned "My Silks and fine Array"; all of these can rank with the best lyrics the Elizabethan age has produced. The most beautiful is the passionate "Mad Song", which already touches a more personal note than is conceivable with the Elizabethan ideal of lyric poetry. In Blake's early productions another influence than the above named is still visible. His "Contemplation" and "The Couch of Death", two pieces of lyrical prose are evidently written under the influence of Ossian. Also in the Prophetic Books Blake uses Ossian's rythmical prose. And he writes in a MS. note on Wordsworth's Supplementary Essay: "I believe both Macpherson and Chatterton: that what they say is ancient, is so."

These influences, however, show themselves only in the poems of his youth and slightly in the Prophetic Books. The Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, Blake's splendid sequels of lyrics, are entirely original; here the poet is altogether himself, free from any influence. It is difficult to delineate the charms, which these poems possess. They form a unity and have a mutual relation to each other and should, in order to be fully appreciated, be read as a whole. The Songs of Innocence give us glimpses of a primitive, naïve world, where men and beasts alike are filled with innocent, youthful happiness and joy. In some of these poems the events of every-day life are transfigured as seen by Blake's keen and exalted mind, e. g. in "Holy Thursday", in which he describes his meeting with the Charity Children

at St. Paul's. Also in the Nurse's Song, in which is told how a nurse at sunset calls the children home from their sports. Besides these we find the pure lyrical song represented in the "Laughing Song" with its happy ring of merry voices; in the "Spring", a very vocal poem despite the imperfect rhymes. Other poems express a child-like piety as "the Lamb" and "A Cradle Song". In all these songs we find a tender loveliness which hardly reappears in Blake's subsequent writings. The "Songs of Experience", written five years later, are deeper, already they show forth Blake's mystic ideas; but though the melody and simplicity of expression remain the same, they have lost in freshness and spontaneity. As an example I quote the first stanza of the beautiful "Cradle Song" with its soft melancholy:

"Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night,
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep".*)

Highly remarkable are the poems "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found". In these Blake illustrates in a beautiful allegory one of his favourite doctrines viz. the physical nature has a right to be indulged in. It is true, and this holds good for Blake's Songs of Experience in general, that we do not easily catch the meaning of these poems; but then the language is so musical, the rhymes are so natural and profuse, the bold images so highly imaginative, that we feel that here we read true poetry of the highest kind. Blake represents in these poems physical nature by the lost girl Lyca (from the Greek word for wolf) who errs through a dense forest:

"Seven summers old
Lovely Lyca told;
She had wander'd long
Hearing wild birds' song".

*) Blake, Works ed. by Gilchrist II, 73.

The parents, the reasonable powers in man, go out to seek her:

"All the night in woe
Lyca's parents go
Over valleys deep,
Where the deserts weep".

They find, however, that the beasts of prey, the symbols of free, natural life, have taken Lyca under their protection.

"Sleeping Lyca lay,
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
View'd the maid asleep."

At last they too acknowledge the natural powers, which at first they feared because of the fierce desires they inspire. Glorified the lion stands before them:

"On his head a crown;
On his shoulders down
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care."

Only now, after having returned to nature, they can live happily:

"To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell;
Nor fear the wolfish howl,
Nor the lion's growl".

These two poems "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", can stand as typical examples for Blake's Songs of Experience. In the same strain are written: "A Little Boy Lost", "A little Girl Lost," "The Fly," "The Chimney Sweeper," etc. All of these poems illuminate one of Blake's philosophical doctrines. The language too is always the same: the words, for the greater part of Teutonic origin, are very simple and often monosyllabic. In the metre also the same tendencies can be observed: generally short-lined stanzas rhyming in couplets are used. Besides end-rhyme interlinear rhyme occurs, where the lines are prolonged, e. g.:

"And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tombstones where flowers should be:
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briers my joys and desires."
(The Garden of Love.)

The same in the opening stanza of "the Angel":

"I dreamt a dream! what can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen." *)

Also in these poems alliteration is found in great profusion, every poem contains several examples of this, so that it will suffice when I give one, chosen at random:

"The Sword sang on the barren heath,
The Sickle in the fruitful field;
The Sword he sang a song of death
But could not make the Sickle yield."
(Couplets and Fragments.)

Another peculiarity of style in these poems consists in the repetition of the same words; often at the beginning of a line:

"I was angry with my friend,
I told my wrath, my wrath did end;
I was angry with my foe,
I told it not, my wrath did grow".
(Christian Forbearance.)

Sometimes a whole line is repeated, the order of the words slightly changed, or exactly the same:

"And I wept both night and day,
And he wiped my tears away,
And I wept both day and night,
And hid from him my heart's delight."
(The Angel.)

*) Imperfect rhymes such as dream-mean, more-poor, echoèd-bed etc. occur very frequently.

And in "The Lamb":

"Little lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is callèd by thy name,
For he calls himself a lamb.

. . . . . .

Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!"

Occasionally even a whole stanza is repeated as in "The Tiger", where the first and last are identical.

In 1793 Blake had published another small volume of poetry: "The Gates of Paradise". These verses show the same peculiarities of style as the foregoing, but the thoughts expressed in them are full of bitterness, as far as their meaning can be understood, hidden as they are in a maze of mysticism. These poems together with the Book of Thel form the transition between Blake's lyrical period and his Prophetic Books. When Blake wrote the Prophetic Books he had lived a secluded, lonely life for several years. There had been a time when by the influence of Flaxman the doors of Mrs. Mathew's*) drawing-room had been opened for Blake. We hear of social gatherings, where the wits of the day, the modish painters and dramatists united in brillant "conversazione". They are now forgotten these literary luminaries of those days; even their names, should I enumerate them, would sound meaningless. Yet Mrs. Mathew's "salon" was famous then and even visited occasionally by sprightly Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu. Here Blake and his young wife Catherine were regular visitors, and Blake sang his songs to tunes of his own. But Blake's wilful and eccentric character and some grave defects in Catherine's breeding were the cause of Blake's breaking with this circle. In a very bitter satire, "The Island in the Moon", Blake exposes the weaknesses of the different persons who

*) Mrs. Mathew (1720—1800) was the wife of a popular clergyman, the Rev. Henry Mathew. They discovered and fostered the genius of Flaxman, and it is said that Mrs. Mathew, learned as well as elegant, would read Homer in the original to Flaxman when he was a boy.

visited Mrs. Mathew's drawing-room. After his worldly failure Blake never tries to mix with the world again, put disgusted with social life, altogether withdraws from society. This voluntary seclusion of a man so highly imaginative as Blake of course had as a result, that he altogether lost contact with the world. He simply writes down his abstract fancies as he sees them before his mental eye, never troubling himself with the thoughts of the impression these fancies would make on the minds of other persons.

Especially the Prophetic Books are full of these wild fancies, and were looked upon by William Rossetti as not free from a tinge of insanity, which opinion seems to have been shared by his brother. Therefore D. G. Rossetti could appreciate the drawings which adorn the works of Blake, the pieces of lyrical song which occasionally relieve the monotony of Blake's rythmical prose, could be impressed by some beautiful descriptive lines as they often occur in Blake, but could not be much influenced by works which he regarded as the aberrations of a sick mind, be it the mind of a genius. I believe Rossetti did not think it worth while to subject Blake's works to a closer investigation for this reason. In his correspondence with Mrs. Gilchrist about the editing of Blake, Rossetti writes: "the truth is that as regards such a poem as "My Spectre"*) I do not understand it a bit better than anyone else; only I know better than some may know, that it has claims as poetry apart from the question of understanding it and therefore is worth printing".

In the same way Rossetti does not understand Blake when he calls Blake's painting of a tiger in streaks of red and green, "an unaccountable perversity of colour" (Literary Paper on W. Blake). Of course it would have been easy to see for

*) "My Spectre around me night and day
Like a wild beast guards my way;
My Emanation far within
Weeps incessantly for my sin."

Lyrical Poems by William Blake. Introduction by Walter Raleigh. Oxford 1905, p. 100.

Rossetti, who himself uses symbolical colours very often, that Blake here for the reason of symbolism deviates from the natural colouring of his tiger. However Rossetti did not think it necessary to seek for an explanation, convinced as he was, that this explanation, both here and in the aforenamed poem, was given already by the "slight tinge of insanity" which is to be found in Blake's works and more especially in the Prophetic Books. In this madness which Rossetti addicted to Blake we have to see the main reason of the comparatively small influence of the Prophetic Books on Rossetti. Moreover, unlike Blake, Rossetti never loses sight of the public he writes for, always the fancies of his imaginative brain are kept in proper check, remindful as he is of the limitations of the ordinary reader. "Above all ideal personalities", Rossetti writes in a letter probably to Mr. Sharp, "with which the poet must learn to identify himself, there is one supremely real . . . namely that of his reader." This is another reason why we do not find in Rossetti's poetry much of the Prophetic Books; with their violent speech, fleeting ideas, and dark symbolism these are so altogether unfit for the general reader. But though, as a rule, Rossetti is more reserved in the expression of his ideas, yet occasionally we find a sonnet in which the turbulence of sounds, the choice of words, and the far too strong imagery are very Blakean.

Most distinctly this influence of Blake's Prophetic Books can be seen in a sonnet entitled "After the French Liberation of Italy", which sonnet I will quote fully, as it is not generally included in D. G. Rossetti's works.

"Lo the twelfth year — the wedding-feast come round
With years for months — and lo the babe new-born;
Out of the womb's rank furnace cast forlorn,
And with contagious effluence seamed and crowned.
To hail his birth, what fiery tongues surround
Hell's Pentecost — what clamour of all cries
That swell from Absalom's scoff to Shinei's,
One scornful gamut of tumultuous sound!

For now the harlot's heart on a new sleeve
Is prankt; and her heart's lord of yesterday
(Spurned from her bed, whose worm-spun silks o'erlay
Such fretwork as that other worm can weave)
Takes in his ears the vanished world's last yell,
And in his flesh the closing teeth of Hell."

This sonnet reads like a passage of Blake's Prophetic Books; the same dim flight of ideas, vaguely expressed in a "fiery tongue" can be found in Blake's Jerusalem, America, Daughters of Albion, or any one of the Prophetic Books we like to open. Apart from this sonnet and a few more, where the same influence is traceable, though not in the same degree, we have to see in Rossetti's exaggerated love for allegory a tendency developed after Blake's example. So we find e. g. in a simple narrative poem like Jenny, dealing with an up to date question, the problem of primitive sin in its crudest and at the same time best-known form, inserted a personification of lust; though very graphic and beautiful in itself, this allegory in which lust, "like a toad in a stone sits from the time the earth was cursed, deaf, blind and alone", seems altogether out of place in this particular kind of poem, dealing with a realistic subject of every-day life.

Far greater is the influence exercised on Rossetti by Blake's lyrical poems. The characteristics of the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience which I pointed out before, can be found in the poems of Rossetti especially in the early ones. However, what Blake found out as it were accidentally and applied half-consciously, has been used by Rossetti systematically, in perfect consciousness of its effect. Therefore Rossetti's poems gain in clearness and construction, but lose in freshness and spontaneity, when compared to Blake's. We find back Blake's naiveté and simple directness of speech in many early poems for example in "The Staff and Scrip"; in the ballad "The white Ship", and in "My Sister's Sleep", a descriptive poem. Best of all this simplicity is exemplified in an admirable termination.

Rossetti put to the ancient stanza "How should I your true-love know?" (Hamlet IV. 5,25) under the title of "An old Song ended,"*) here comes a quatrain which reads almost exactly like one of Blake's Songs of Innocence in its child-like turn of phrase:

"For a token is there nought,
Say, that he should bring?"
"He will bear a ring I gave
And another ring."

In these poems we find a preference for monosyllabic words of Teutonic origin, with which often great dignity of expression has been achieved e. g. in the "White Ship"**) the lines:

"The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,
And the deep shuddered and the moon shone"

or in the following lines from "The Staff and Scrip": ***)

"Uncover ye his face", she said.
"O changed in little space!"
She cried, "O pale that was so red!
O God, O God of Grace!
Cover his face!"

Exactly as in Blake's lyrics, a profuse use of alliteration has been made; we also find the repetition of the same words, the same phrases or occasionally the same stanzas. Of Rossetti's use of alliteration I will not give examples, as there are hardly any poems in which no alliterative lines occur. I will merely mention the poem called "Chimes"****) in which alliteration has been carried to an excess, and where we find lines like:

*) ibid. p. 300.
**) ibid. p. 137.
***) ibid. p. 75.
****) ibid. p. 330.

Lost love — labour and lullaby
And lowly let love lie,

where the sense has been sacrificed to the melody of sound.

Very interesting is the use Rossetti makes of the repetition of the same phrase or line; by using these lines at regular intervals they form a kind of chorus to his poems, and remind the reader continually of the mood which forms the back-ground of the poetical image. The most striking example is his poem "Troy Town",*) where the too frequent repetition of the same words is almost monotonous. The poem opens with the following stanza:

"Heaven-born Helen, Sparta's queen,
(O Troy Town!)
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
All Love's Lordship lay between.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire.)"

In fourteen stanzas the refrain "O Troy Town! O Troy's down, Tall Troy's on fire!" besides the last word of the third line "heart's desire" are repeated exactly in the same place, and we feel that we have too much of a good thing. Far happier the repetition of the same words has been applied in the ballad "Sister Helen";**) the refrain shows slight changes in accordance with the thoughts expressed in the stanza concerned; here the constant tragic appeal to the holy virgin heightens the dramatic force of the poem. I will quote the first and last stanzas of this ballad, which illustrates a well-known superstition of the middle-ages and tells the story of a deceived bride who avenges herself on her unfaithful lover by making a wax-image of him which she burns and the melting of which causes the death of the deceiver. The events are told in the form of a dialogue between the bride and her little brother.

---

*) ibid. p. 305.
**) ibid. p. 66.

"Why did you melt your waxen man,
Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day between Hell and Heaven!)

and the last stanza:

"Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,
Sister Helen?
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?"
"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

These repetitions of the same words as a burden Rossetti uses with more or less effect in many other poems except the above mentioned. We find it in "Eden Bower", "A Death-Parting", "The Cloud Confines", and several others. I believe to have made sufficiently clear now that we have to see the influence of Blake in the foregoing qualities of Rossetti's poetry. It will, however, have been noticed that like the influence of the philosophy of Blake, the influence of his poetry, though distinct and by no means insignificant, has been of a general kind. Blake's style and metre appealed to Rossetti, but we cannot say that one particular poem of Blake took a stronger hold on Rossetti's imagination than another. A direct influence of Blake's poetry cannot be traced, as far as I can see, in any of Rossetti's poems, a single one excepted. This poem is "The Blessed Damozel."*) It has been written as a contribution for the Germ, **) when Rossetti was still in the prime of his youth; it is among the first and at the same time one of the best, if not the very best

*) ibid. p. 232.

**) The Germ was a periodical devoted to the art principles of the Praeraphaelites. Only two numbers were issued, the first in Jan. 1850.

poem of Rossetti and undoubtedly the poem which has mostly served of all Rossetti's poetical works to render him famous. In this lyric which sings of the longings of a holy virgin in heaven for the lover whom she left behind on earth, Rossetti blends in a wonderful way human devotion and pious mysticism. D. G. Rossetti himself says that the subject of the Blessed Damozel had been suggested to him by E. A. Poe's poem the Raven; what Poe had done for earthly love, he would do for the love in heaven. Critics all agree that this poem owes little to any previous writer. Benson *) sees traces of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner in it; Joseph Knight **) speaks of Rossetti being inspired when writing this poem by the pictures of the early Italian painters; even if these influences do exist they are very vague; far more real is in this instance Blake's influence; here indeed Rossetti owes much to this author.

We find in this poem, that physical facts have been introduced in an abstract subject, a very bold thing to do which Rossetti achieved with splendid tact. The Blessed Damozel is represented as standing on the rampart of Heaven; she sees the souls pass by her like thin flames, and

"... bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm,
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm."

(stanza 8.)

And again afterwards the spiritual virgin most ethereal of beings

"laid her face between her hands and wept"

(last stanza.)

Blake very often introduces physical processes in abstract themes, though generally the effect is rather grotesque, owing to Blake's exaggeration. As an example for this a "Memorable Fancy" can serve in which Blake expresses his thoughts about the origin of the "principle of the human perception". This

*) Rossetti, by A. C. Benson. London 1904, 1906.

**) Life of D. G. Rossetti, by Joseph Knight. London 1887.

Memorable Fancy opens with the words "The Prophets Isaiah and Ezechiel d i n e d with me" and somewhat further now we find written "After d i n n e r I asked Isaiah etc." I need not point out the ridiculousness of representing spiritual visions of the prophets as taking dinner; but yet the same principle which Blake followed here has been honoured in the Blessed Damozel.

Further we find here instances of Blake's art as a painter influencing the poetry of D. G. Rossetti. Blake made illustrations for the Book of Job. These belong to his most splendid engravings. On plate 15 of this series the morning stars are depicted, represented as an endless row of angels singing, with hands uplifted for joy. Under the engraving is written: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Rossetti admired this engraving highly and we find the image of the "singing stars" in the Blessed Damozel:

"The stars sang in their spheres"

(stanza 9.)

"Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together".

(stanza 10.)

There was another engraving of Blake's, which suggested to Rossetti the seven stars, the Blessed Damozel wears in her hair, as we can read in the opening stanza of this poem.

"And the stars in her hair were seven."

(stanza 1.)

In a large engraving of Blake we find these seven stars adorning the hair of a beautiful figure of a woman, probably a soul admitted into eternity. This engraving forms the title-page of Night III of Young's Night-Thoughts, a work which Blake illustrated.

And at last we can trace Blake's influence in the eighteenth stanza of the Blessed Damozel. Here the handmaidens of the virgin are enumerated, and the series of these melodious names, which do not all of them represent saints, seem to have been inserted for the sake of euphony only.

"We two, she said, will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys".

(stanza 18.)

This same kind of enumeration we find in more than one case with Blake, the greatest resemblance to the foregoing is however shown in the Laughing Song, where the following stanza occurs:

"When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing

Ha, ha, he!"

With this last rather striking example of Blake's literary influence on Dante Gabriel Rossetti I will close the discussion of Blake's direct influence. I think I have fully shown the different items in which this influence existed, also how it made itself felt mostly in the first period of D. G. Rossetti's literary career, when the Praeraphaelitic love for naïve and natural expression could not but result in a great appreciation of Blake. Putting together for, the sake of clearness, the principal facts which formed the bias for these and the following investigations we find in chronological order:

a) 1847. Rossetti finds in the British Museum the Ms. Book of Blake, now known as "the Rossetti Ms."

b) 1856. Rossetti receives as a New-Year's gift Haley's*) "Ballad of the Eagle" illustrated by Blake and writes

*) William Haley (1745—1820) was "poet, country gentleman and patron of art and literature." He was a great friend of Blake and Cowper, whose biography he wrote. The poems he wrote are of no literary value; the full title of the above mentioned poem is: "Ballads on Anecdotes relating to Animals."

in a letter to William Allingham*): "Old Blake is quite as loveable by his oddities as by his genius, and the drawings to the ballads abound with both. Nearly faultless are the Eagle and the Hermit's Dog." "As regards engraving these drawings — with the Job.— present the only good medium between etching and formal line that I ever met with."

c) 1859. Rossetti enumerates the "Choicest English Poems" and includes Blake's The Angel. (Letter to W. Allingham, Christmas 1859.)

d) 1860. Alexander Gilchrist asks Rossetti to send him the Ms. Book of Blake, which he wants to use for his work on Blake.

e) 1861-63. After the death of Alexander Gilchrist (Nov. 1861), Rossetti together with Mrs. A. Gilchrist completes Gilchrist's work on Blake. Rossetti writes a finishing chapter of Blake's Life (included now in his works. Literary Papers. William Blake vol. I. p. 443) but his chief concern was the editing of Blake's poems. Out of the confused heap of Blake Mss. he chose and polished and even made small alterations, filled up an occasional gap or substituted an unreadable word and thus gave us the beautiful selection of Blake's poems we find in the second volume of Alexander Gilchrist's work on Blake.

f) 1875. Towards 1875 and 1881 Rossetti writes two notices on the paintings of Samuel Palmer**) and says in these: "The possessors of his works have what must grow in influence, just as the possessors of Blake's

*) William Allingham, a friend of Rossetti, was a great lover of literature and art and a sound art critic. In 1874 he was appointed editor of Fraser's Magazine, and for many years edited this periodical.

**) Samuel Palmer (1805—1881) was an English landscape painter of the romantic school. Besides his watercolours he is known by his beautiful illustrations of Milton's Allegro and Penseroso.

creations are beginning to find" and further on "His works are clear inspiration, which is a point very hard to attain to in landscape art; but in him one may almost say that it was as evident as in Blake." (Rossetti, vol. II, p. 504 and 529.)

g) 1880. Rossetti writes a sonnet on Blake. (Five English Poets, vol. I, p. 338.)

Influence of William Blake's painting.

In the foregoing pages I have shown how Blake's philosophy can be traced in the art works of Rossetti; how it was this philosophy which to no small extent directed the bent of Rossetti's genius and made of him a painter of imagination. Next to the influence of Blake's mysticism on Rossetti's art we have to place the influence of Blake's thoughts and criticisms upon art as laid down by him in his "Descriptive Catalogue" and in his "Marginal Notes to the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds". Though Rossetti's admiration for Blake's drawings, engravings, and coloured prints must have been great, as the reminiscences of these productions were used in one of Rossetti's best poems, in the Blessed Damozel, as I pointed out before, yet the traces we find of Blake's artistic influence in Rossetti's art works are few and of a comparatively small value.*)

In 1798 there appeared the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, his "Discourses on Painting". Blake wrote marginal notes to these works, first in 1803 and for a second time about 1820, and vehemently criticized them. His other critical opinions have been expressed in a descriptive Catalogue**) which he wrote for an

*) It may be that the colouring of Rossetti's pictures forms the one exception here; but as comparatively few pictures of D. G. Rossetti were accessible to me in the originals, I cannot form an adequate opinion in this matter.

**) A descriptive Catalogue of Pictures, poetical and historical Inventions painted by William Blake in Water Colours being the ancient Method of Fresco Painting restored and Drawings for public Inspection and for sale by private Contract. London 1809.

exhibition of his own works, which took place in 1809. Both in his Marginal Notes and in the descriptive Catalogue we find the most violent abuse of the Venetian and Flemish Schools, of the contemporary English school of landscape painters, fathered by Gainsborough and against the art of J. Reynolds himself. Blake found that the typical in art had a higher effect on the mind than the individual; this he sees in Raphael and Michael-Angelo, while in Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt he sees the individual, the form of the model who sat for the pictures. Further he accuses those painters of generalizing viz. of an arrangement of effects of colouring, texture and shadow so put together as to prevent a picture to present clearly its individual parts, limbs or features. This last fault he thinks no oil-painting escapes, hence his preference for water colours and drawings. Lastly he strongly objects to the colouring of those painters. The terms in which Blake puts forth these opinions are those of the most violent abuse and the grossest exaggeration.

Rubens is called an "outrageous demon", of his colouring Blake remarks that it is "most contemptible". "The shadows are of a filthy brown, somewhat of the colour of excrement" etc. (Descriptive Catalogue.) Sir Joshua Reynolds and his school are called "a gang of cunning hired knaves", and about his method of generalisation Blake remarks: "to generalize is to be an idiot. General knowledges are those knowledges that idiots possess". (Descriptive Catalogue.) Elsewhere Gainsborough is compared to a blurring and blotting demon, and to the Venetian masters in general the terms of "journeymen" and "knaves" have been applied. Though personal taste of course can be the reason why Blake appreciated the art of Michael Angelo, Dürer, and Rafael more, yet it is an extraordinary instance of narrow-mindedness to reject altogether such painters as Rembrandt, Rubens, and Correggio. We can explain this hatred, however, when we compare with it the equally strong disapprobation Blake utters in the case of the philosophy of Bacon; the worship of nature of Swedenborg and Dante; and the empirical science represented to him by Newton. We find the following epitaph on Bacon:

"O! Reader, behold the Philosopher's grave!
He was born quite a Fool, but he died quite a Knave".

On Dante the following note has been written by Blake on a drawing of Homer:

"Everything in Dante shows that for tyrannical purposes he has made this world the foundation of all and as poor Cha-Bell (?) said: Nature not memory, thou art my goddess".

Of Swedenborg he tells us in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell that "he wrote down all the old falsehoods" by which falsehoods Swedenborg's belief in Nature must be understood.

And in Jerusalem we find in the following lines the idea expressed that Newton and Locke's doctrines are pernicious to mankind.

"The Spectre like a hoar-frost and a
mildew rose over Albion;
Saying: I am God, o sons of men, I am
your rational power.
Am I not Bacon and Newton and Locke
who teach humility to men!
Who teach doubt and experiment".

We see in the foregoing examples that besides the Venetian and Flemish schools of painting Blake's hatred was enflamed against the belief in nature, against empirical science and rational philosophy; for Blake saw here everywhere hindrances for the development of the imaginative faculties. Faith in mysticism, in supernatural agency, in heavenly inspiration, in the exulting purifying influence of the art of the visionary could not be expressed in the solid worldliness of style of the aforenamed painters, neither exist in the minds of men who accepted nothing that had not been sufficiently proved. For Blake to whom "imagination was the principal goddess" this was ample reason for violent hatred. It was not against the art itself of those painters he revolted, but against the meaning and influence of it.

That he could even appreciate Rembrandt as an artist is proved by his letter to the Rev. Dr. Trusler (16th Aug. 1799) to whom Blake writes alluding to paintings he had made for him: "You will have a number of cabinet pictures that will not be unworthy of a scholar of Rembrandt and Teniers, whom I have studied no less than Michael Angelo and Raphael". But Blake wanted with all the power that dwelt in him to bring back the art of painting in new correspondence with the world of imaginative and intellectual ideals. He considered as the greatest representatives of artists, who entirely neglected the intellectual and metaphysical meaning in art, those of the Venetian and Flemish schools. Here the evil had taken root which resulted in an entire absence of lofty ideas and poetical motives. It must not be forgotten at what a low ebb the English art of the beginning of the nineteenth century was, and how difficult a position Blake had taken up against the current ideas of conventionalism.

As landscape painters we find Callcott, Thomas Creswick, Stanfield and Frederick Lee, all good executants but not free from artificiality. Other painters are Fuseli (Füssli) and Benjamin West, who undoubtedly not without genius, stood under the several influences of Dutch, German, and Italian schools and produced not a single original, inspired picture with an intellectual grasp of the subject or a rendering of feelings neither melodramatic nor theatrical.

Sick of the correctly drawn, but highly conventional insipid genre pictures of the day Blake fell into another extreme and followed the rule that by far the principal aim of painting was to bring home to men intellectual or emotional truths, that for this purpose correctness in drawing, adherence to the natura evidence of the senses in colour and form might even be sacrificed. These principles found utterance in his violent criticisms on one hand and besides were expressed in the quaint and weird, often even grotesque, qualities of his pictures and drawings. Before everything else Blake's paintings want to express his ideas and in this he succeeded, perhaps because he really had ideas to express. Therefore his pictures, though full of man-

nerisms and misdrawings, touch us more even than any amount of capable and accomplished works dealing with imaginative themes, but lacking imagination. We find in these works a great preference for the Gothic style; Blake, in 1773, when an apprentice to Basire, the engraver, had been sent to make drawings in Westminister Abbey. For five years he was occupied in copying the monuments of the Abbey, and his love for the Gothic style never left him during all his life. "Gothic" he would say "is living form". Nowhere he has given more perfect expression ol his love for it than in his Illustrations of the Book of Job.*)

Also he owed much to the formation of his style to Michael Angelo, but his knowledge of the master was derived from copies and prints, the only material available, which exaggerated the muscular development. (It was not until photographs of the Sistine frescos were available for study that Michael Angelo became truly known). Hence we find exaggerated muscular human figures in Blake's works, especially in his illustrations to the Prophetic Books, his male figures above all suffer from this fault. In his females is notable a graceful sweeping curve of the back-line, which together with the large eyes and oval faces gives these figures a peculiar charm and a great tenderness of expression. His innumerable floating angelic figures can hardly be surpassed by any artist as to their immaterial, heavenly aspect.

Remarkable is also Blake's colouring, which is of an extraordinary great brilliancy and transparency. Wonderful in colouring is e. g. Blake's representation of Jehovah which we find on the title page of the Book of Europe. Jehovah is represented here as an old man, the personification of the rigid rational laws, the creator of bodily existence, in accordance with the contents of the Book. From a fiery red sun he bends himself down in the

---

*) These illustrations were made in 1821 for Mr. John Linnell after some drawings previously executed for Captain Butt. These engravings are reproduced with great fidelity and clearness by Alexander Gilchrist.

vast black masses of space and with a pair of golden compasses gives measure and number to infinity.*)

Splendid in colour are also many of Blake's "frescoes". Blake indicated with this name a particular process which in its details is as yet not known to us, but which mainly consisted in painting on a basis of plaster and carpenter's lime. A process partly already used by Cennino Cennini in 1437 and which George Cumberland**) mentions in his "Thoughts on Outline". In all probability Blake, who was an intimate friend of Cumberland had his knowledge of this process from him, though he himself professes that his dead brother Robert in a dream advised him a particular mixture of water colours, and that further the Greek artist Appelles, viz. his spirit, had been his teacher in colouring. One of the most beautiful frescoes is the Procession to mount Calvary, a symphony of colours of an exquisite tenderness and great satiated mellowness.***) Very beautiful and executed with infinite care and patience are the accessories in Blake's drawings and water colours; everywhere in his illustrations of the Prophetic Books, in his engravings of the Book of Job or of Young's Night Thoughts we find marginal drawings and small interspersed symbolical paintings, which are perfect miniatures. Generally these sketches are of a decorative character consisting of animals: serpents, spiders, and fishes; often also sprigs of green with a great tenderness of outline are used, and after Blake's stay in Felpham****), we find occasionally small landscapes introduced in his paintings, a low horizon, a winding path, a

*) Blake took the image from Milton's Paradise Lost VII, 225 where we find the following lines:

"He took the golden compasses, prepared
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
This Universe, and all created things."

**) George Cumberland was a contemporary of Blake, a native of Bristol. Blake writes to him "I study your outlines as usual, just as if they were antique". (26th Aug. 1799).

***) National Gallery London.

****) Blake spent three years of his life 1800—1803 on the sea coast in Sussex, in the village of Felpham.

running stream, all showing great beauties of colouring and patient carefulness of execution. To Blake's mannerisms, to his preference for long noses and flabby cheeks, to his impossibly contorted figures, I need not draw attention, they are only too apparent from all his works. His innumerable misdrawings which he might easily have corrected, of course lessen the impression his pictures make on us, so does his want of dramatic power; we feel astonishment when we look at the violent passions, the awful scenes Blake puts before our eyes, we never turn away from them with a shudder of dismay. Neither did Blake escape altogether the faults of the century he lived in, often e. g. in the illustrations of Young's Night Thoughts we find the theatrical stiffness and melodramatic effects of the later 18th century painting.

Yet though his faults be many, his work leaves an impression on the mind, and this is one test of vital work; for after all it is expression which counts in art.

It was to rebel against the total want of expression in works of art that in the autumn of 1848 the celebrated Praeraphaelitic Brotherhood was constituted. The story of the origin of the brotherhood has been told again and again, so I may assume it to be generally known and will not repeat it here. The central idea of it was a revolt against conventionality. As Blake had done thirty years before, they stood up in arms against the degeneration of the English art, now in the hands of men like Wilkie, Leslie and Mulready, men who traded with cheap emotions and conventional optimism, who had no fundamental conception, no imagination, no force of expression. William Rossetti thus enumerates the Praeraphaelitic aims:

a) To have genuine ideas to express;

b) To study nature attentively, so as to know how to express them;

c) To sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote.

They thought that the age in which these principles were mostly cherished, was the age of the early Italian masters. They saw from Giotto to Leonardo strong evidences of grace and decorative charm, observation and definition of certain appearances of nature, and patient and loving, but not mechanical labour. They did not take these earlier painters as their models, but they wished to revert the principles of an artistic age in which painting was carried on, not after a dominating tradition but on strong individual lines. In technique the Brotherhood took the the use of primary colours, avoided low tones and dark backgrounds and developed each individual portion of a picture with the same fidelity. The only modern painter in whom they found an original and independent spirit was Blake. Moreover the movement was literary as well as artistic as its leader was both poet and painter; the theories written on art were as many as the pictures painted. In Blake's critical opinions Rossetti found many criticisms which he held among the best ever expressed on art. Blake's aversion to Rembrandt and Rubens, to Reynolds and the Venetian painters was shared for the greater part by Rossetti who, himself a man of violent temper*), could appreciate Blake's strong abuse of these painters, who had abandoned the high ideals of art. When in Brussels 1849 visiting the Picture Gallery, Rossetti writes to his brother: "One room was full of Rubens, so we held aloof". In his journey through Belgium he admires the mystic paintings of van Eyck, especially his Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine and the Saviour, but it is interesting to see how he was to a greater extent fascinated by the power of another Flemish primitive, Memling, on account of the intellectual superiority of the latter. Of Rubens he writes from Antwerp again: "Rubens seems to be considered here a common fool enough". The aversion to Sir Joshua Reynolds showed itself in the nick-name "Sloshua" given to him by Millais and suggested

*) In F. Madox Brown's diary we find written about Rossetti's temper: "He has left off abusing his enemies, that apparently having lost its zest from overuse — and now vituperates his friends — or those of the person addressed, as more provoking".

by the adjective "sloshy" which was applied to all indefinite, feeble and superficial work.

Rossetti however did not share Blake's antipathy to the Venetian masters, whose colouring deeply affected his paintings, neither did he partake of Blake's admiration for Michael Angelo to whose pictures, which he saw in Paris, he had a great aversion.

Except the abuse of the afore-named painters he also found here the rule not to generalize, but to execute everything, down to the smallest detail, with equal care. We see how he followed this rule in his first pictures e. g. in his "Girlhood of the Virgin" we find a trellis work overgrown with leaves executed with minute care; exactly tne same carefulness is bestowed on the many accessories of a symbolic nature which are found on this picture e. g.; the dove with a golden halo round its head; the lily and the scroll on which we find written the words: "Tot dolores, tot gaudia". Though afterwards Rossetti did not exhibit these characteristics to the same extent, yet we always find that great care has been taken in the execution of the details, as may be seen in the dream-like little landscapes which often form the background of his pictures. Such a mystic landscape we find in Dante's Dream seen through a window at the back of the pictures, also in the Blessed Damozel we have little peeps of Heaven; in both pictures the landscapes are beautiful examples of minuteness of execution.

Like Blake Rossetti thought the typical in art of a higher effect than the individual, like him he sought to free himself from the model. This has given rise to the idea that Rossetti used as his models only two types of heads, that of his wife and that of Mrs. Morris. This is a great error. He painted from seventeen models in all. Mrs. Beyer sat for the picture Joan of Arc; Mrs. Hannay for Dante's Dream; Miss Herbet, the actress, for Bocca Baciata etc. Rossetti omitted accidental individual differences, and this produced together with his favourite mannerisms, the long necks, over-slim hands and over-full lips, the impression of his painting for ever the same woman.

Rossetti is a lover of the Gothic style as many of his pictures clearly show, and though of course, it is difficult to say by whom this love was kindled, yet it is certain that his study of Blake could not but strengthen it.

In the different works about Rossetti's art there is generally found the idea that his art may be divided in two or sometimes three different periods. In his first period, called Praeraphaelitic, Rossetti is represented as the painter of religious pictures; then a second period, a kind of transition, is assumed to prepare as it were the great change that comes over Rossetti and makes of him in his last and most important period a painter of imagination. I believe this view of Rossetti's art to be not the right one. Rossetti was a painter of imagination from the very first of his artistic career. The idea that the art of his day, in order to rise from its low ebb, ought to be brought into contact again with the world of intellectual and emotional ideals Rossetti found in Blake's doctrines on art and in his works. This idea he adopted enthusiastically from the very first, and never abandoned it throughout his life. Hence the relatively small attention he pays to technical shortcomings in his paintings. Always the idea predominates over the matter; actions are allowed to appear as strained; compositions as naïve, even the due proportions of things to each other may be lost sight of, provided only the emotional and intellectual parts are given due prominence.

In the beginning of his career Rossetti thought that the early Italian art was the most fitted medium to express his conception. His two pictures dealing with religious subjects "Girlhood of the Virgin" and "Ecce Ancilla Domini" try to render mystic feelings and thoughts by stiff decorative gestures, naïve grouping, and a wealth of mediaeval symbolic accessory. Rossetti however seems to yearn after a simpler, deeper way of expressing the same thing. It is interesting to see how he tries all different styles of painting and of colouring and slowly through many phases finds the way of expressing his emotions and ideas best fitted to his exotic genius, and gives us that strange series of half and three-quarter length female figures which to most people are all that is meant in art by the name of Rossetti.

After having left the early Italian style Rossetti tries the genre-picture painted from modern life. From all kinds of paintings this kind of picture is perhaps suited worst of all to express real emotion and represent a true phase of the intellect, hence Rossetti's greatest genre-picture "Found" was never finished, though in 1882, more than twenty-five years after the original painting was begun, Rossetti made a fruitless attempt to finish it. It would carry me too far to talk in particular of all the different phases Rossetti's genius passes through, phases which were often taken up again after some intervening years and are crossing and recrossing each other.

From all his different efforts to find expression for the same thing I will speak only of that one more in detail which was directly influenced by Blake. We find paintings by Rossetti full of movement, crowded with figures, all of which have a symbolical meaning. The best example of this is his pencil drawing "The Question". It symbolizes the cruel fate of men in dying. In a solitary wood far from the haunts of men a Sphinx is sitting, the three ages have found their way to her, wanting her to solve the riddle of life. The boy has put his question and the answer has made him fall down; the man inquires after his fate, the old man painfully strives to reach the Sphinx. Blake deals with the same subject in the illustration of Blair's*) Grave (Plate 5) "'T is here all meet", viz. in the valley of death, which Blake depicts as a mountain cave. Here old age creeps about, here come the father and his daughter, the mother and her children, the lonely virgin and the hardy peasant, all those whom death reaps.

Besides this drawing many others of Rossetti use Blake's way of expressing emotions or ideas. In a water colour "The Gate of Memory" a woman half hidden behind a pillar sees the past years of her life before her in the figures of ever so many maidens. The same allegorical image Blake uses in one of his

*) Robert Blair (1699-1746) was a learned Scotch clergyman of great virtue, he wrote one poem "The Grave" which shows a great resemblance to Young's Night Thoughts.

illustrations for Young's Night Thoughts where a virtuous old man converses with the past hours of his life, some of the hours, winged females, bring their report to heaven, others crowd around him.

In Rossetti's "Boat of Love", an illustration to Dante's Vita Nuova, we discern Blake's influence in the angel standing at the stern and in the graceful back-line of the woman. More distinctly Blakean is the floating figure of an Angel Rossetti drew as frontispiece for his sonnet sequel; compared to Blake's sweeping figures this angel, however, lacks in grace and seems hopelessly solid for a soul of one "dead deathless" hour which it represents. Many other pictures and drawings of Rossetti besides the above mentioned prove that he for a while tried to express his ideas like Blake by scenes full of action, full of movement; here emotions are represented by floating angels, strange half-human beings, winged flowers etc., though Rossetti never falls into the exaggeration of Blake, always keeps the interpretation of his visions within certain limits.

At last after years of seeking and striving Rossetti's genius found in the above mentioned female portraits its full development, the true medium for its mystic and emotional outpourings. Could not he have found the prototype of his women in a copy of Blake's Book of Thel in the British Museum? This conjecture is not impossible, for here we find a wonderful lovely image of Thel, tall, slender and graceful with a small full mouth and large expressive eyes. On a background of deep satiated red this fair-haired long-necked maiden clothed in pale yellow, stands out in beautiful relief and reminds us of many a sketch of Rossetti's splendid women-figures.

A considerable influence Blake has had on Rossetti's colouring. I have found that Blake's colours are always, at least as far as time has not spoiled them, of great simplicity, purity, brilliancy, and transparency. These same qualities I have observed in many of the pictures of Rossetti, for instance in "Beata Beatrix", the "Day Dream" and "Ecce Ancilla Domini"; in others I saw a certain dim, opulent richness of colouring viz. in the watercolour Lucrecia Borgia; in his later works his colours seem to have

become hot and jarring. Though both painters show the same brilliant and glowing qualities in colouring, yet it is not necessarily to Blake that Rossetti had to go for the studying of this brilliancy and transparency of colouring, as many other artists, for instance the Venetians, also possess these qualities in a high degree. However Ruskin in his "Art of England" tells us that Rossetti as to his colouring was much affected by studying illuminated Mss. and we may conclude from this that it was highly probable that Blake's illuminated Mss., splendid as they are, were consulted for this purpose.

I believe that it has been made clear in the foregoing pages that the epithet of "great artistic forerunner of Dante Gabriel Rossetti" so often bestowed upon Blake in the several biographies of Rossetti, is indeed fully deserved by this poet. When we consider the influence of Blake as a philosopher, as a poet, and as a painter, we see that it is above all Blake's mysticism which penetrates all Rossetti's work and lends it such a peculiar, indefinable charm; a charm which will cause his pictures and poems to be remembered when the works of far greater authors and painters will have been forgotten. The influence of Blake's mysticism has also been the only philosophical influence which I could trace in Rossetti's works, the very few cases excepted, which of course cannot be traced, in which Rossetti was influenced directly by Swedenborg. At least one example of this exists in the Sonnet "Her Heaven" where the lines occur:

"If to grow old in Heaven is to grow young
(As the Seer saw and said), then blest were he
With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
True Woman, she whom these weak notes have sung." *)

In an explanatory note to this sonnet W. M. Rossetti informs us that in those lines with "the Seer" Swedenborg is meant. Though of course the possibility is not excluded that in more cases Swedenborg directly influenced Rossetti, yet compared to Blake's, this influence is so small, and moreover tends in the same direction, that we need not take it into consideration.

*) House of Lite, Sonnet LVIII. Vol. 1. p. 204.

Thus far I spoke of the direct influence of Blake on Rossetti, in one case at least I could clearly trace an indirect influence. Rossetti's prose tales "Hand and Soul" and "Saint Agnes of Intercession" show, especially in their style, the influence of Charles Wells*).

Rossetti cherished at a time an exaggerated admiration for the works of this author. He even proposes to have his scriptural drama "Joseph and his Brethren" acted, but is kept back, from this purpose by Ruskin, who judges this drama to be not without some good descriptive parts, but as a whole finds it "wrong" (Letter of Ruskin to Rossetti, Denmark Hill, 1854). And indeed this drama full of incongruities and quite Blakean in its exalted and primeval poetry, would have been a decided failure on the stage. — This same admiration Rossetti had for the prose tales of Wells, collected under the title "Stories after Nature". These stories possess a sort of incongruous beauty, a savour of impossibility which baffles us and more or less spoils our delight in them. But nevertheless their beauties are undeniable, beauties of a subtle etherealised style as we also find in "Hand and Soul" and "Saint Agnes of Intercession"; beauties consisting in a great wealth of imagery, subtly chosen, in order to show forth the mysticism which underlies all of these stories. I need hardly say, that the prose tales of Rossetti abound in this kind of imagery, though Rossetti for all the melody of his style never absolutely sacrifices sense to melody as happens occasionally to Wells. Another quality which both authors have in common, is that, perhaps owing to the dimness of the plots, the stories are not carried to a satisfactory end. "Saint Agnes of Intercession" breaks off in the middle, as is also the case with the most poetical story

*) Charles Wells, † 1878, wrote under the name of H. L. Howard. He wrote "Stories after Nature", printed in 1822 and reprinted in 1891. London. In 1824 appeared his scriptural drama "Joseph and his Brethren" reprinted in London 1876. Wells is an author of great skill and excepting J. J. Garth Wilkinson the author of an obscure book "Inprovisiations of the Spirit", seems to be one of the few direct poetical imitators of Blake, using the same phraseology and having the same mystical faith as his great predecessor.

of Wells called "Zara, the rich Man's Daughter"; but even when the stories are brought to an end, we feel the effort, which it cost the author, and more or less our delight is spoiled.

When considering the influence of Blake's literary productions, I found that it was greatly surpassed by Blake's influence as a philosopher and also that the works of several other poets made as deep or perhaps a deeper impression on the mind of Rossetti. In the first place Dante must be named here, whose sonnets' sequel "Vita Nuova" was translated by Rossetti and greatly influenced the sonnets of The House of Life. Further I found the influence of the Italian poet Cavalcanti *) (namely in Rossetti's Italian songs); nor is it wonderful that Rossetti loved Italian poetry, when we consider that his father was a full-blooded Italian, a poet himself and a Dante commentator of some fame. Besides Dante we find Shakespeare (indeed which English poet is not influenced more or less by him!), Browning, Coleridge, and in the last period of his career Thomas Chatterton, who influenced Rossetti. (William M. Rossetti's Preface to the Collected Works of D. G. Rossetti. London 1906.)

It is not the place here to enter more into details concerning the further influences on Rossetti. I think I have shown sufficiently clearly in the foregoing pages that Blake already in the beginning of Rossetti's artistic career had a strong hold on his imagination and that it was Blake who inclined the bend of Rossetti's genius in the peculiar direction which through his long artistic career it was never to leave. It was indeed Blake who anticipated the Praeraphaelitic movement and might be called the spiritual father of this movement.

But though Blake stood up against untruth and conventionality in art, his too fantastical mind and the unfortunate outward

*) Guido Cavalcanti, born in Florence about 1250, was a friend of Dante and a poet who wrote admirable Sonnets (translated by D. G. Rossetti, vol. II, 116—163). He came of a noble family, took active part in the struggles between the Guelfs and Ghibellines, was banished to an unhealthy wild district, whence he returned with a sickness and died probably in 1301.

circumstances of his life were the cause, that he could not change the current conception about art; the genius of Rossetti was wanted to mould his ideas into proper form and have them accepted by a large circle of artists.

List of Books used.

1. **Percy H. Bates.** The English Praeraphaelitic Painters. London 1899

2. **A. C. Benson.** Rossetti. London 1904 and 1906.

3. **W. Blake.** The Lyrical Poems of William Blake. Text by John Sampson, Introduction by W. Raleigh. Oxford 1905.

4. **W. Blake.** The Works of W. Blake. Poetic symbolic and critical Ed. by E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats. London 1893.

5. **W. Blake.** There is no natural Religion. Privately printed. London 1886.

6. **R. Buchanan.** The Fleshly School of Poetry and other Phenomena of the Day. London 1872.

7. **Henry Dunn.** Recollections of D. G. Rossetti and his Circle. London 1904.

8. **Edwin J. Ellis.** The Real Blake. A Portrait Biography. London 1906.

9. **P. T. Forsyth.** Religion in Recent Art. Manchester 1889.

10. **A. Gilchrist.** Life of William Blake with Selections from his Poems and other Writings by Alexander Gilchrist. London 1863 and 1880.

11. **G. Birbeck Hill.** Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham. London 1897.

12. **J. Knight.** Life of D. G. Rossetti. London 1887.

13. **R. Muther.** Geschichte der Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts. Band III. München 1893 und 1894.

14. **Max Nordau.** Entartung. Berlin 1892, 1893 und 1896.

15. **W. Pater.** Appreciations. London 1889.

16. **E. Radford.** Rossetti. Round Table Series No. 6. 1886.

17. **Helene Richter.** William Blake. Strassburg 1906.

18. **D. G. Rossetti.** Collected Works in 2 vols. Ed. by W. M. Rossetti. London 1888.

19. **D. G. Rossetti.** Thoughts towards Nature, Literature and Art (in the Germ). London 1851.

20. **D. G. Rossetti.** Sir Huge the Heron, a legendary Tale in four Parts. (Printed for private circulation). London 1843.

21. **W. M. Rossetti.** Praeraphaelitic Diaries and Letters. London 1900.

22. **W. M. Rossetti.** D. G. Rossetti as Designer and Writer. London 1884.

23. **W. M. Rossetti.** D. G. Rossetti, his Family Letters. London 1895.

24. **W. M. Rossetti.** Ruskin, Rossetti, Praeraphaelitism. London 1889.

25. **J. Ruskin.** Praeraphaelitism. London 1851.

26. **W. Bell Scott.** Autobiographical Notes. London 1892.

27. **James Smetham.** Life of William Blake. "Quarterly Review". Jan. 1882.

28. **E. C. Stedman.** William Blake, Poet and Painter. Essay from "The Critic" 1882.

29. **F. G. Stephens.** Rossetti. London 1894.

30. **Ch. A. Swinburne.** William Blake, a critical Essay. London 1858, 1868, 1906.

31. **F. Tatham.** Letters of William Blake, together with his Life. London 1906.

32. **J. Thomson.** Shelley, a Poem, to which is added an Essay on the Poems of W. Blake (privately printed). London 1884.

33. **Waldschmidt.** Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Jena 1904.

34. **S. Warren.** Compendium of the theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. London 1875 and 1901.

35. **Granger Watkin.** Robert Browning and the English Pre-Raphaelites. (Dissertation). Breslau 1908.

36. **Th. Watts.** The Truth about Rossetti. "Nineteenth Century". March 1883.

37. **Charles Wells.** Stories after Nature. London 1822 and 1891.

38. **Charles Wells.** Joseph and his Brethren. London 1824 and 1876.

39. **Esther Wood.** Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Praeraphaelitic Movement. London 1894.

I, Johanna Christina Emerentia Bassalik-de Vries, daughter of Lambertus and Helena de Vries was born in Zwolle (Holland) on the 21st of June 1874. In my native town I visited the girls high-school for seven years. Afterwards I followed for two years the lectures on philology of Prof. H. Bülbring at the University of Groningen (Holland). Then I went to England as a teacher for one year and a half, and from there to Zürich, where in the year 1906 I passed the examination of maturity (Maturitäts-Examen). From that time I studied at the University of Zürich philology, psychology, and philosophy. My principal teachers were Prof. Th. Vetter, Prof. F. Schumann, and Prof. G. Störring. To these gentlemen my sincere thanks are due. Especially I want to thank Prof. Th. Vetter for his kind interest and assistance in my work.